

# CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS *in California*

United States Department of Agriculture   Natural Resources Conservation Service   Davis, California

**Last Issue of the Century!**



## NRCS Employee's Inspiring Music Helps "Fund the Fight" Against Breast Cancer

See Page 6

## Millennium Special: The Story of Our Beginning



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# Photosphere



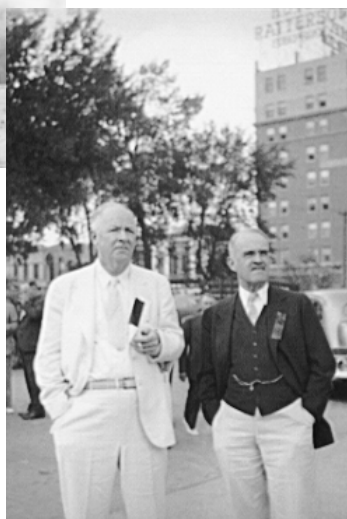
At left, singer-songwriter **Sammy Moore, Jr.**, singing his inspired song "Lets Fund the Fight" at Sacramento's New Testament Baptist Church on Nov. 15. In the background are the church choir and church Choir Director **William "Bill" Miller**, who also performed on the CD recording. See the story on page 6.



District Conservationist **Jim Spear** (above) talks to sixth grade students about soil at an environmental camp during the week of September 13-17. See the story on page 9.



Above, a fleeing truck tries to escape a wall of blowing soil during the Dust Bowl in 1936. At right, **Hugh Hammond Bennett** (standing on the left), more than any other person, influenced the development of the soil conservation movement in the U.S. The Soil Conservation Service was created with the Soil Conservation Act of 1935 and Bennett served as the agency's first Chief. See the story on page 4.



**This Won't Hurt a Bit...**  
Auburn District Conservationist **Cliff Heitz** (above) shares a nature tattoo with this young girl at the AgroArts Fair in Placer County in September.

**On the cover:** Farmer and sons walking in the face of a dust storm (Cimmarron County, Oklahoma, 1936). From the Library of Congress, Prints and photographs Division, FSA-OWI Collection.

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DECEMBER 1999

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## A Message from Jeff

**W**ow—holidays already? Did somebody speed up the clocks or something? Still, when I reflect on a year's worth of NRCS conservation work in California, it makes more sense that 1999 really is closing. There has been so much conservation accomplished, that it *must* have been at least 12 months.

First of all I have to share the fact that I'm very impressed with how many of you have taken the new cluster concept that I put forth and accepted my challenge to make it work. There have been a lot of changes around here in the last decade and I tossed one more into the mix. Not only were you not daunted, the field staff and the partners looked at the idea positively and are finding new ways to cluster talents and share opportunities. It's gratifying—though not exactly surprising.

Pointing to our programs there is more reason to celebrate. Fifty thousand acres of wetlands have been restored through WRP alone!!! It's a major affirmation of our philosophy that high quality conservation **can** be achieved using voluntary incentives and good technical assistance. Turning to EQIP, we find that this tool is gradually becoming increasingly recognized as an essential ingredient in the mix of conservation tools on the landscape. In forestry, we had an excellent year lining up resources to help private forest owners, and the floodplain easements in Stanislaus County continue to make headlines as an important part of the restoration of the Tuolumne River.

Our soils program made giant strides this year to accept the challenge to get the last 7 million acres of California mapped by the year 2005. It's a major increase in workload and administrative challenges, but everyone is attacking it with dedication and enthusiasm, producing tools we will all use for decades.



Despite all these successes, there is sometimes a lack of external recognition for the programs and values we support. At such times it is tempting to not feel valued for the hard work and sacrifices we all make.

But we have many supporters. Just last week we heard that California Cattlemen's—despite some skepticism over EQIP three years ago—is sending a resolution forward to their national organization in support of our budget and our work in that industry. Dignitaries from The Resources Agency recently pointed to NRCS as an important conservation player and the only ones filling an important niche. And they aren't the only ones. There are many vocal partners as well as subtle signs of quiet support across the landscape. Certainly *I* value what each and every one of you are doing. Despite occasional setbacks, our goals are bigger and more long-term than any momentary disappointments.

Having shared these reflections, I wish you all safe and satisfying Holidays. And when that ever-accelerating clock chimes 2000, we will all continue the conservation movement into the new millennium...computers willing.

# In the Beginning...

*By Dave Sanden, PAS, Davis SO*

As we enter a new century and prepare to face the conservation challenges of a new millennium, it is appropriate, and perhaps useful, to pause a moment to reflect on our humble beginning.

Out of the Dust Bowl our agency arose, filled with the life breath of its true creator, **Hugh Hammond Bennett**. It's hard for us to imagine how little was known about soil conservation (or natural resource conservation) in those days. The knowledge that we now take for granted simply didn't exist.

Through the following historical articles, we can briefly recall those dark and dusty days, which held the glimmer of a brighter future for conservation.



**"The father of soil conservation"**

*Hugh H. Bennett, perusing the latest Dust Bowl news in 1935.*

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## How SCS Came to Be

Reprinted from Soil and Water Conservation News 6, no. 1 (April 1985): 3-4.

By Douglas Helms, National Historian, Soil Conservation Service

Those brief, exciting, often hectic 20 months between September 19, 1933, when Hugh Hammond Bennett became Director of the Soil Erosion Service (SES), and April 27, 1935, when the Soil Conservation Act was passed, were important times for the course of the conservation movement. That there would be national legislation to provide for a continued commitment to soil conservation was by no means assured. Current friends of the conservation movement can look to that period with a sense of admiration; not with a feeling that no mistakes were made, but with an appreciation for the early leaders who transformed vision into reality.

Certainly, Hugh Bennett foresaw and worked for a government organization dedicated to soil conservation. His vision of a permanent agriculture had no room for a brief flurry of emergency employment activities that would fade from the tapestry of conservation once the crisis had passed. Shortly after taking up the new work he wrote to his second in command, Walter C. Lowdermilk: "We are getting into a line of work which I think is bound to carry on... We have no insurmountable wall of prejudice standing out in front of us. The road is wide open, and if all of us are duly consumed with the magnitude of the undertaking, the importance of succeeding in our plan, and the absolute necessity of not giving an inch until we have really accomplished something on a large scale, then we are bound to carry on until we have completed the task laid out for us."

It was though Bennett's career had been an apprenticeship for the work he was now beginning. His experience—and opinions as to corrective measures—was SES's main asset as the young group went about its work in a manner that enhanced its chance for permanence, rather than in a manner that ensured its demise after the Depression. Through the years of reading, corresponding, and conversing with the handful of people active in soil conservation, Bennett knew to whom he would entrust the field work—the work that would actually determine the success or failure of the program. These were the people who believed as he did in a coordinated approach to conservation employing "all practical measures of control in accordance with the adaptability of the land." His early correspondence makes clear that he thought the coordinated farm plan would involve the cooperative efforts of agronomists, foresters, range specialists, soil experts, engineers, and economists.

Equally important to the future of the work was his determination that the money be spent conserving farmlands with a future, and demonstrating that expensive land restoration would not be necessary under proper land use.

The watershed projects—demonstrational as well as experimental—would reveal the benefits of conservation area wide, beyond the individual farm. Another important tactic in the early days involved Bennett's attitude toward educating the public. He wanted to



## Hugh Hammond Bennett

The following excerpts are taken from an article on Bennett that Douglas Helms wrote for the *Encyclopedia of the Environment*, published by Houghton Mifflin Company.

A native of Anson County, North Carolina, Bennett graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1903, and then joined the Bureau of Soils in the U.S. Department of Agriculture. While making soil surveys in the southern United States Bennett became convinced of the threat soil erosion posed to the country's future agricultural productivity. His numerous speeches and articles soon earned him a reputation as the nation's leading advocate of soil conservation, and he was selected to head a temporary New Deal agency, the Soil Erosion Service in the Department of the Interior in September 1933. On April 27, 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Soil Conservation Act which created the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) in the Department of Agriculture. Bennett set the course of the nation's soil and water conservation programs as the first chief of SCS, a position he held until November 13, 1951....

Bennett came to be regarded as the "father of soil conservation." He was significant in elevating concern about soil erosion from the level of a few disparate voices to a national movement of awareness and commitment. Soil conservation joined forestry and scenic areas as national conservation concerns. His successes are evident in federal laws for soil conservation, a federal Soil Conservation Service, professional organizations, public interests organizations committed to soil and water conservation, and increased emphasis on soil conservation in university curricula....

Bennett had obvious political skills and was a master at seizing the opportune moment. He successfully lobbied for funds in 1929 for a series of soil erosion experiment stations and then supervised their work. When it became obvious that there would funds for soil conservation work, he pushed his ideas and his candidacy to head up the work. His sense of the dramatic was on display during the Senate Public Lands Committee hearings on the Soil Conservation Act in April 1935. Realizing that a great dust storm from the Great Plains was blowing eastward, he used its sky-darkening arrival to dramatize the cause of soil conservation and win approval for the legislation creating the Soil Conservation Service.

influence the body politic, not just the farmers. It was his ability to communicate, with the written and the spoken word, at all levels which started and sustained the movement during its early days.

To be sure there were factors beyond SES's control which created a climate favorable to continuing the work: the persistent Depression, the dust storms blown eastward, and the magazines and newspapers with heart-rending photographs which documented poor land and poor people in a clearer focus than ever before.

Out in the field the demonstration projects were popular. Requests by farmers and their Congressional representatives for Civilian Conservation Corps camps and projects further enhanced the reputation of the Service. But the Congressional authorization for spending would expire on June 15, 1935. The impending deadline, combined with Bennett's desire for a permanent organization, brought things to a head.

Agricultural groups argued that such work belonged in the Department of Agriculture (USDA). Conservation friends in Congress stood ready to introduce legislation including all the authorities needed for a soil conservation agency. The prospect of legislation forced President Roosevelt to deal with the situation. He summoned Bennett to the White House in March 1935.

The conservation (as recounted Bennett) showed how successful he had been. The President thought Bennett's group must be doing a good job since they had become the object of desire for acquisition. It seemed to the President that the agricultural nature of the work merited a change to USDA. With the President's blessing, events moved quickly and smoothly. On March 25, 1935, he transferred SES from the Department of the Interior to USDA. After brief hearings Congress passed the Soil Conservation Act which the President signed on April 27, 1935. All who had taken part in the movement could take pride in the charge of the service, which was "to provide permanently for the control and prevention of soil erosion and thereby to preserve natural resources."

*In October, 1994, the Soil Conservation Service became the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture reorganization. Today, NRCS and conservation districts address natural resource issues ranging from soil and water conservation to wildlife habitat restoration and dairy waste management.*

# NRCS Staffer Pens Song to “Fund the Fight” Against Breast Cancer

*By Brad Fisher, PAS, NHQ*

Reprinted from *NRCS This Week*, Oct. 29, 1999

The people of NRCS are well known for offering their time and talent to worthy causes, while both on and off the clock. A story with a special spin, however, comes from **Sammy Moore, Jr.**, Management Analyst for Civil Rights, at the agency's California State Office.

Sammy, a singer and songwriter whose resumé resonates with four decades of musical accomplishments, has turned his talents toward the benefit of Cure Breast Cancer, Inc., a grassroots, nonprofit organization committed not only to living up to its name, but to educating the public about breast cancer and the need for its early detection, as well. Among CBC's goals are providing care to all women, whether they have health insurance or not. Led by **Dr. Ernie Bodai**, the Sacramento-area surgeon who developed the U.S. Postal Service's breast cancer awareness postage stamp, CBC is staffed by a nearly all-volunteer workforce.

Coming from this caring connection between CBC and Sammy is “Let's Fund the Fight,” a song powered by a spirited, emotional, and uncompromising appeal that aims right at the heart of both the listener and the issue. “The lyrics say it all,” says Sammy. Here's a sample: “Is she your mother, your sister, your friend, or some stranger facing a night with no end/What does it matter? Her life's on the line/It makes no difference if she's your friend or mine/Let's fund the fight.”

Sacramento's New Testament Baptist Church Choir delivers a triumphant and haunting back up to Sammy's soulful and hard-hitting lead vocal. Serving as producer and engineer was **Bob Snieckus**, the NRCS' National Landscape Architect. The recording session was conducted in the sanctuary of the choir's home church where the first public performance of “Let's Fund the Fight” was held on November 15.



*Sammy Moore, Jr., presents Dr. Ernie Bodai with an autographed copy of “Let's Fund the Fight” at the first public performance of the song on Nov. 15.*

“Let's Fund the Fight” is winning a nationwide audience and is available on compact disc from Amazon.com, CDNow, Tower Records, and CBC's web site at <[www.curebreastcancer.org](http://www.curebreastcancer.org)> Some sites offer downloadable sound bites. Recordings of this kind typically return 30 cents per dollar to the sponsor. CBC, however, will receive 85 cents of every dollar generated by the song; the remaining 15 cents will cover production and distribution costs. “The level of return going to CBC is totally unheard of. It's just not done,” said Sammy. “But we are doing it anyway.” For more information about “Let's Fund the Fight,” please contact CBC at (916) 614-5122.

# DEDICATION CEREMONIES INAUGURATE HERON'S HEAD PARK

*By Jolene Lau and Lisa Hokholt*

One of this year's San Francisco Urban Resources Partnership (SF-URP) grant recipients is the Port of San Francisco's Heron's Head Park Restoration Project located on the southeastern shoreline of San Francisco. Recently, a dedication ceremony took place with San Francisco Mayor **Willie Brown** recognizing and thanking all the contributors who played a part in restoring the long-neglected artificial fill site. "This is truly an environmental model," said Mayor Brown in praise of the community's efforts. State Assemblyman **Kevin Shelley**, who was also at the event, stated, "This used to be a community nobody wanted." That's because for years it has been the target for illegal dumping. Now, after more than a year of planning and improvements, the site shows great promise for wildlife habitat, clean and safe recreational activities such as fishing, hiking, and wildlife viewing, and as an outdoor classroom.

area include snowy egrets, cormorants, mud crabs, brown pelicans, and herons.

SF-URP supported a natural history education program at Heron's Head Park that provided docent training to four interns recruited from the local community. Once trained, the docents have led several groups of students on site tours to learn about natural resources and to participate in restoration projects including weed abatement and native plant establishment. Teachers have expressed praise for the docent program because of its involvement of people of color in a local environmental education program.

As part of the dedication ceremonies, students from the Gloria Davis Middle School created and exhibited an array of materials about Heron's Head Park's natural history.



*San Francisco Urban Office Team Leader Lisa Hokholt (center) shares the stage with assemblyman Kevin Shelly (holding shovel) and Mayor Willie Brown at Heron's Head Park dedication ceremony. The event honored several partners who contributed to the park's transformation.*

The San Francisco Urban Team also assisted the Port of San Francisco with soil characterization analysis. Additionally, NRCS and the International Committee of Anthropogenic Soils hosted a tour of the site because of its uniqueness and management challenges due to the site's makeup of heterogeneous compacted fill.

Carol Bach of the Port of San Francisco presented a certificate of recognition to San Francisco Urban Office Team Leader

**Lisa Hokholt** and the San Francisco Urban Resources

Partnership for their contributions to the restoration of Heron's Head Park. You can visit the park at Pier 98 near Cargo Way off Third Street in San Francisco.

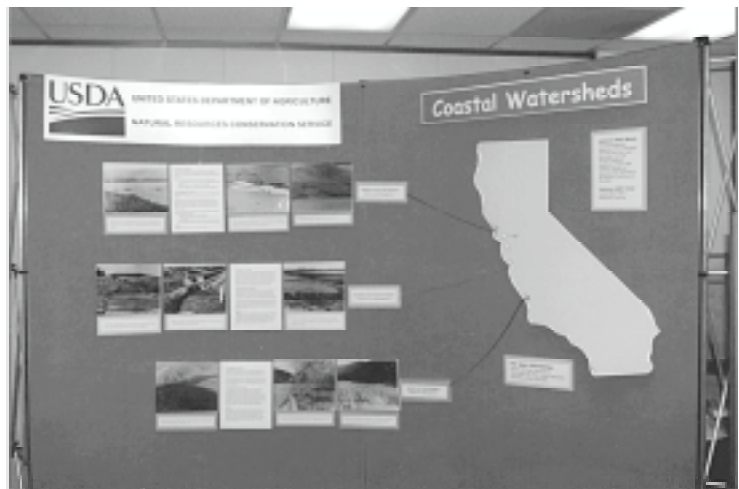
From the air, the 25-acre shoreline park looks like a heron's head, hence the name. With support from various community groups, the area was converted from a long-abandoned commercial shipping pier to become San Francisco's newest, and possibly most spectacular, wildlife habitat area. Wildlife that visit the

## Thanks to all the Helping Hands

*By Jolene Lau, Public Affairs Specialist, Salinas AO*

**Gary Nordstrom**, Director of the Conservation Operations Division in Washington, D.C., requested California Public Affairs assistance for the Coastal Zone '99 Conference in San Diego, held in July. Many hands helped to accomplish this outreach effort, and I'd like to thank everyone involved. The international conference focused on the relationship between coastal and human resources, the watershed perspective, and the public connections to the coastal environment.

**Daniel Mountjoy**, Resource Conservationist in the Salinas Area Office, came up with the design and wanted to highlight the Tomales Bay Watershed, Elkhorn Slough, and Morro Bay Watershed. **Charlette Sanders**, District Conservationist in the Petaluma Service Center, and her staff provided information and photos on Tomales Bay. **Scott Robbins**, HUA Project leader in the Central Coast RC&D Office provided information and photos on Morro Bay. Mountjoy provided the information and photos on Elkhorn Slough.



*Many helping hands made this unique display possible.*

The unique display was well commended for the beautiful title banner, "Coastal Watersheds," and the California map. Thanks to the quick and professional hands of **Dan Toan**, Civil Engineer, and **Terryl Kocsis**, Soil Conservationist, both in the State Office. Mahalos for that Dan and Terryl! Thanks also to **Mariane Hallet**, Water Supply Specialist in the State Office, for letting me borrow the USDA-NRCS banner. **Jason Jackson**, **Vic Smothers**, and **Howard Mueller**, of the Escondido Service Center received the unit, did the setup, and staffed the booth from July 27 through July 29.

In a short period of time, this great team created the display design, gathered all of the necessary information and photos, and assembled and presented the display at the international conference.

NRCS sure does have a great bunch of people!



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## Kids Learn About Environment in Outdoor Classroom

*By Kate Simpson, Information Technician, Weaverville FO*

The outdoors became a classroom for sixth-graders of Weaverville Elementary school, who attended environmental camp at Bar 717 Ranch in Hyampom during the week of September 13-17.

With their notebooks and pens in plastic bags, students hiked the forest trails to study flora, fauna, and geology of the Hyampom/Hayfork Creek area. Local resource professionals led workshops on birds, soils, aquatics, forestry, watershed awareness, and salmonoid life history. Other sessions covered search and rescue, gardening and composting, and life skills.

This is the first year that the environmental camp has been held at Bar 717. **Karen Metcalf**, one of the organizers of this venture, helped set things up and recruited resource people to lead the sessions. **Pat Frost** of the Trinity County RCD took the kids on a bird watching expedition. District Conservationist **Jim Spear** talked to the students about soil. A trip into the creek to look for aquatic life was led by Fisheries Biologist **Tim Viel**. **Scott Morris** conducted the life skills rope course. **Kathleen Hitt** and **Brenda Reynolds**, of the Americorps Watershed Stewards Project, led the students on hikes to experience the watershed and taught them about salmon survival through the use of games.

The students all had a relaxed week of fresh air, exercise, and exciting environmental science. The essence of the experience was captured by one of the students, **Casey Metcalf**, who wrote, "The food was delicious. The homestead and river were beautiful. If we got up early, we could feed the animals and milk a cow. There was beautiful scenery. There was a baby colt and three calves. It was great!"

## Private Land Conservation Forum Draws a Crowd

On Oct. 22, more than 200 concerned people helped USDA to build a new conservation strategy for the next millennium at a Private Land Conservation Forum held in Sacramento.

The forum, one of five regional forums held across the country, allowed attendees to access first hand the issues, concerns, and opportunities relating to America's private lands. Deputy Secretary Richard Rominger presided over the meeting, and eight panelists gave presentations. Staff from the offices of Congressmen Doolittle, Ose, and Herger also were present.

Sixty-four people spoke during the public discussion and comment period. Some of the comments expressed include the following:

- Wetland restoration is critical
- Resource Conservation Districts work and funding should be expanded through NRCS
- Agency people should listen to landowners more
- More funding is needed for research and conservation education.

## Cooperators Efforts Recognized

*By Jolene Lau, Public Affairs Specialist, Salinas Area Office*

With the scent of garlic bread on the BBQ grill, about 40 guests gathered at the Elkhorn Slough Visitors Center to recognize Monterey County's exceptional conservation farmers. The Resource Conservation District (RCD) of Monterey County welcomed guests to the annual cooperator appreciation dinner on the evening of August 19. Guests browsed through the fascinating Elkhorn Slough Visitors Center before sitting down to enjoy a wonderfully cooked meal followed by an impressive presentation.

Slide shows highlighted the accomplishments of each awardee before the presentation of plaques. **Tom Lockart**, RCD Program manager; **Al Cerna**, District Conservationist; and **Jonathan Berkey**, Elkhorn Watershed Project Coordinator; all from the Salinas Service Center, presented the awards to **Jim Nielson**, Conservation Farmer of the Year; and to **Sid Itamura** and **Don Chapin** for being Exceptional Cooperators. **Daniel Mountjoy**, Resource Conservationist in the Salinas Area Office, also conducted a slide show and presented **Harry Lewis**, a landowner, with an award for being an exceptional cooperator.

Nielson was recognized for his efforts in removing non-native plants on his farm and replacing them with native species. His WHIP project allowed him to fence and revegetate the farm, establishing a formal boundary for his wetland and helping to protect the endangered species living there. **Glenn Wilcox**, Resource Conservationist in the Salinas Area Office, made supportive remarks on Nielsen's cooperation. Letters of recommendation were presented to Nielson from **Diane Noda** of the Fish and Wildlife Service and **Patricia Anderson** of the California Department of Fish and Game.



Itamura was recognized for his innovative sediment basins, cover crops, and buffer strips. Chapin is the owner of Chapin Construction Company and was recognized for his assistance in removing sand from a channel due to flooding and reusing the sand in storm drain construction in the Pajaro area. Lewis was recognized for his pro-active role as a conservation-minded landowner. Also at the awards ceremony, Soil Conservation Technician **Bob Loveland** and Civil Engineer **Phuc Vu** received countless Kudos for their hard work on these and other projects. Both are from the Salinas Service Center.

A belated Award of Merit was presented to **Ed Duran** for his exceptional cooperation last year. **Al Cerna** concluded the ceremony and presented Mountjoy with a Certificate of Appreciation for his assistance with the Elkhorn Slough Project.

Thanks to the cooks and congratulations to all!

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## Joe Baca Sworn In As New House Member

### *Legislative News Flash*

On Thursday, November 18, 1999, **Joe Baca** was sworn in to fill the vacant seat of California's 42nd Congressional District. Baca, 52, succeeds the late **George Brown** who died on July 15. He has been assigned to the House Agriculture Committee as well as the House Science Committee.

## Mojave Desert Series Wins First Place

A 6-part series on NRCS work with the Mojave Desert Resource Conservation District won the Department first place (for TV news stories) in the National Association of Government Communicators' Gold Screen Awards.

USDA's **Pat O'Leary** and **Bob Stobaugh** did the video, with the assistance of Public Affairs Specialist **Rudy Perez** and District Conservationist **Rick Aguayo**, which was uplinked to broadcasters this fall, highlighting the work of NRCS and its partners in this unique southern California ecosystem.

## Bay TV News Interviews Girls 2000

*By Jolene Lau and Lisa Hokholt*

At a recent awards ceremony, the San Francisco Urban Resources Partnership (SF-URP) awarded conservation grants to 18 local groups. One of those groups, Girls 2000, was selected for an extensive interview by San Francisco's Bay TV News. During the interview, which took place at the Adam Rogers Community Garden, "**Mama**" **Sylvia Simmons**, project coordinator for the Girls 2000 environmental program, described how SF-URP has made a difference in her community. She described how skills learned by the youth interns and their land stewardship activities have resulted in the development of caring and knowledgeable community stewards. San Francisco Urban Office Team Leader **Lisa Hokholt** was also interviewed. She described the overall goals of URP and how NRCS provides conservation planning and technical assistance to help improve natural resources in an urban setting.

Through SF-URP's support, Girls 2000 is able to provide job training and employment opportunities, combined with natural resources education and career guidance, to teenage girls from the Bayview Hunters Point community of southeast San Francisco.

Although not individually interviewed by the news team, the other grant recipients shared the spotlight at the Second Annual SF-URP Awards Ceremony. Assistant Deputy Secretary of Agriculture **Glenda Humiston** made a special trip to San Francisco to personally commend the endeavors of the grant recipients. Assistant Conservationist for Field Office Operations **Carter Christenson** was also on hand to recognize the contributions of URP, its partners, and program recipients.

# EMPLOYEE ORGANIZATIONS WHY DO WE NEED THEM?

By

*Tish Espinosa, Conservation Agronomist, Stockton FO*

**O**ur employees have asked this question many times. Why do we have employee organizations, what is their purpose and why do we need them?

NRCS has four professional organizations. They are the National Organization for Professional Black NRCS Employees, National Organization for Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees, Asian Pacific Islanders Organization, and NRCS American Indian / Alaska Native Employee Association. These professional organizations are no different than the Soil and Water Conservation Society, American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society, Board of Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors, Society for Range Management, Soil Science Society of America, etc., except for the fact that they promote conservation of our nation's natural resources to minority groups. All these organizations are knowledgeable in their specific arenas, and through them we further our knowledge and accomplish our duties which enables us to fulfill the mission of the NRCS.

NRCS Employee Organizations provide excellent training opportunities to their members. This is done by encouraging their members to be active participants and serve on committees, chair meetings, moderate sessions and participate in conferences. Individuals gain knowledge while developing their leadership skills. Employees are also encouraged to write technical papers and display poster boards on projects that he or she is actively involved in. This allows individuals to develop and enhance their skills.

Employee organizations provide an excellent opportunity to network with individuals all over the country. Networking and mentoring with experienced professional leaders / members of these organizations provides career development and enhancement. Networking improves communication and communication leads to enlightenment. For the

majority of NRCS employees, this type of professional enhancement is a rare opportunity that should be utilized by all NRCS employees.

The professional organizations assist NRCS in program delivery to minority customers. Members assist NRCS leadership with the identification of barriers and then help address solutions to these problems. For example, they take the lead in translating information into various languages so minority groups can apply conservation practices on the ground. They help with the identification of community leaders to assist NRCS with the delivery of its vision and mission to all customers. They bring cultural awareness to the agency.

In closing I would like to remind you that NRCS Employee Organizations are open to **all** employees who would like to participate. The membership consists of not only NRCS employees, but also other USDA agency personnel such as Rural Development, Farm Service Agency, Forest Service, etc. These organizations are essential for various reasons. Via these professional arenas all employees who participate will further develop their professional skills which are of the utmost importance. All professional organizations fulfill specific goals but, the experience and knowledge gained in these forums is available to everybody.

These organizations enlighten people through effective communication. Employee organizations are not antagonistic, they are quite the opposite. We strongly encourage all NRCS employees to participate so that we can open the lines of communication. We will continue to reach out in this manner but, we all know that communication is a two way street. It is impossible to judge the importance of these organizations until you have been a member. Attaining the facts makes intelligent judgements and decisions possible.



## PERSONNEL CHANGES

NAME	POSITION	ACTION	GRADE	LOCATION	DATE
Benedict, P.	ASTC-FO	Promotion	GS-13	Riverside	9/12/99
Collins, J.	Soil Consvst	Career Promotion	GS-09	Colusa	9/12/99
Judd, C.	Ofc Auto Clk	Temp Appt	GS-03	Santa Maria	9/01/99
Lunt, T.	Soil Cons Tech	Temp Appt	GS-04	Petaluma	8/30/99
Carnes, J.	Computer Spec	Reassignment	GS-12	Davis	9/26/99
Chavez, L.	St Tr PA	Reassignment	GS-02	Chico	8/29/99
Rocha, A.	St Tr SC	Reassignment	GS-05	Fresno	8/29/99
Lindsay, C.	St Tr SC	Reassignment	GS-04	Arcata	8/29/99
Nelson, M.	St Tr SC	Promotion	GS-05	Arcata	8/15/99
Yang, T.	Ofc Auto Clk	Promotion	GS-04	Fresno	9/12/99
Witt, D.	Range Consv	Promotion	GS-11	Madera	8/29/99
Turner, S.	Ag Engr	Promotion	GS-11	Los Banos	8/29/99
Tarver, C.	ASTC-FO	Promotion	GS-13	Fresno	9/12/99
Rogers, R.	Native Am Liaison	Promotion	GS-12	Greenville	9/26/99
McCleery, D.	Soil Consv	Reassignment	GS-11	Jackson	9/12/99
Lucas, J.	Soil Cons Tech	Term-Exp of Appt	GS-07	Woodland	11/01/99
Pellersels, W.	Soil Cons Tech	Reassignment	GS-09	Livermore	11/07/99
Jeffries, M.	Dist Consv	Reassignment	GS-12	Visalia	9/26/99
Palmer, E.	St Tr Biology	Reassignment	GS-04	Woodland	10/05/99
Torres, P.	St Tr Agronomy	Reassignment	GS-04	LA Urban	9/27/99
Snyder, J.	Soil Consv	Transfer to VA	GS-11	Colusa	11/07/99
Johnson, D.	Project Leader	Promotion	GS-12	Lancaster	11/07/99
White, J.	Ag Engr	Promotion	GS-09	Davis	11/07/99

## Spirits High at CARCD's Alpine Conference

*By Paul Laustsen, PAS, SO*

The annual CARCD Conference was once again "a success," according to CARCD Executive Director **Tom Wehri**. Situated in a scenic alpine setting at the Granlibakken Conference Center at Lake Tahoe, conference goers were challenged by conservation issues from all sides.

Attending the conference, held Nov. 6-9, were more than 200 CARCD members and supporters, including several NRCS employees. Attendees enjoyed fascinating speakers, participated in panel discussions and workshops, and shared conservation ideas and resources. Those arriving early had an opportunity to tour Backyard Conservation projects around the lake.



Pictured above left, EQIP Education Coordinator **Gail Chun** with His Eminence **Fortunate Eagle**, a prominent speaker at the conference. Above right, conference attendees pay homage to their country before a panel discussion.

# CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

*in California*

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